The Journal of the Independent Women's Forum ◆ Winter 2000 ◆ No. 22

The Women's Quarterly

Special Jane Austen Issue

Why all the buzz about the lady from Bath?

Christine Stolba on the Beijing Brigade & Kay Hymowitz on trying kids as adults

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Diary

My Fried Green Tomatoes

Aunt Willie was infamous in my family. In her straw Panama hat and narrow four-in-hand tie, Willie was a well-known figure in Greenville, Mississippi in the 1920s through the 1940s. An obvious lesbian, though no one would have described her that way, Willie swore like a longshoreman, was famous for her alcoholic binges, and rolled her own cigarettes from Bull Durham.

Willie, in the words of my cousin John Seymour Erwin, author of *Like Some Green Laurel*, a historical novel about another member of the family, was "a woman of pronounced masculinity, who alternated between being delightful and being a tiger in the raw."

I have a sepia photo of Willie in a bowler hat, posing before a pier glass mirror with an unidentified woman in a top hat. When my grandfather met Willie, he almost didn't marry into my grandmother's family. What shocked him was not what today would be called Willie's "sexual orientation." He was appalled that Willie was a *lady photographer*. The product of a defeated South clinging desperately to shreds of order and decorum, he would have considered "lady photographer" an oxymoron.

Willie studied photography in New York with Arnold Genthe, whose pictures of Isadora Duncan's dancers and San Francisco's Chinatown in the early 1900s are in the special collections at the Library of Congress. When John Erwin met Genthe many years later in New York, the photographer recalled Willie as "a violent spirit."

Willie made a name photographing such southern luminaries as *Lanterns on the Levee* author William Alexander Percy and William Faulkner. Photography was not simply an avocation for Willie. Always living on the brink of penury, she needed the money.

Willie grew up on Chatham Plantation, near Greenville. She was probably born in the 1890s, but nobody knew for certain—it was Willie who established our family credo that a lady never tells her age. Willie's passion for gambling—which she shared with her father, Col. Matt Johnson—and her love of traveling abroad helped ruin her family.

According to my sister, a repository of family lore, the final disaster came when Willie demanded a trip to Australia, and a doting Col. Matt foolishly mortgaged his cotton crop. To make ends meet, Willie did cartoons for the Memphis *Commercial Appeal* in the 1920s and ran an interior decorating business with her great good friend, Pearl Alexander, a divorcee from Vicksburg.

When Pearl and Willie eventually quarreled, Willie, according to John Erwin, chased the other woman with a frying pan. Even though Willie died before I was born, I was never so naïve as to accept my mother's patently ridiculous assertion that Aunt Willie (who was actually a distant cousin) had once loved a man who died before they could wed.

After a tense period in which the Delta's intellectual set was asked to take sides—Willie or Pearl—Pearl left Greenville and moved to Spain, where, in the 1930s, she witnessed executions against the garden wall.

Willie spent her last years in New Mexico. When she died, and all were assembled in the sweltering heat of the Greenville cemetery, a prominent matron drove up and leaned out the car window: "Yoo-hoo!" she sang out, "Willie missed her train. Come back tomorrow."

And come back they did, to bury a local legend. Willie lived in an era when her "lifestyle" didn't force her to become politicized. Everybody (including my mother) knew the truth about Aunt Willie. But nobody cared that much.

My grandfather, a man for whom the word philistine was invented, ended up accepting Willie as just one more eccentric relative. He merely shrugged the summer he brought his family back from the country to find that artsy house-sitter Willie had retouched the portraits and painted the interior walls black.

Although a rebel, Willie Johnson was truly part of a community (what an overused word in an era marked by hollow familiarity!). Despite her unconventionality, Willie was never an outsider in Greenville.

Ideology that makes the personal political is a poison, no matter who drinks it. Willie was able to live blessedly free from this poison. She was a far bolder woman than the ideologues who today would insist that she join them or else be reviled as a coward.

–Charlotte Hays

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"Daddy! When I grow up, I want to be just like you!...except with a slightly more erect posture and a bigger brain."

Cover by Yuri Kolyadenko. Cartoon (above) by Charles Jaffé

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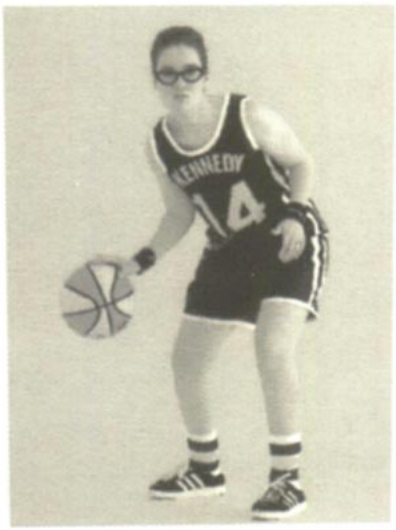
Interview

Shooting from the Hip



Libertarian video DJ *Kennedy* talks to *Charlotte Hays* about prudes, guns, and why Bill Maher is a pig

SHE'S NOT YOUR ordinary Kennedy. Lisa Kennedy Montgomery—known simply as Kennedy—the 27-year-old former MTV VJ, is her own person. She's the hip conservative in a hip liberal milieu. There's a pink Republican elephant tattooed on her upper left thigh, and she once admitted to having a mad crush on Dan Quayle.

Kennedy's blend of edgy conservatism and libertarianism delights some and infuriates others: While still in her early twenties, Kennedy had the distinct honor of being parodied on her favorite sex symbol's least favorite TV show, *Murphy Brown*, as right-wing teenybopper McGovern, the opinionated bane of Murphy's existence.

She's the daughter of a corporate lawyer and artist mother, who divorced when she was a child. Kennedy was "raised in suburban bliss just on the outskirts of Portland, Oregon." After graduating from high school in 1990, she packed her '72 VW Bug and headed for Los Angeles. There, at the age of nineteen, she became a DJ at KROQ radio station. Two years later, she was in New York, hosting the nightly video grunge show, *Alternative Nation*, on MTV.

A bespectacled jock, Kennedy was a CBS commentator during the 1998 Winter Olympics in Nagano. She often speaks about her political views at colleges and universities. Kennedy wrote her first book last year, *Hey Ladies! Tales & Tips for Curious Girls*, a compendium of sage advice in a lingo most parents don't even know.

Among the book's comforting insights: Beautiful, bosomy cheerleaders inevitably grow up to become "either fat or strippers," and it's not necessary to drink or lose your "hey nanny nanny" to have fun in high school.

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Kennedy talked to *TWQ* editor Charlotte Hays one afternoon from Los Angeles.

TWQ: Why did you call host Bill Maher a big, fat pig the other night on *Politically Incorrect*?

KENNEDY: I didn't call him a big, fat pig. I just told him he was a pig. Bill has his own ideas about women's place in society and on marriage. I think his ideas are a bit piggish and very early twentieth century. He's one of those guys who would like wearing a fedora and smoking a cigar and having the little lady do the dishes and retire early so he could go out and cat around. I don't think he's a bad person. You can be a pig and still be a great person.

TWQ: Has being a conservative helped or hurt you professionally?

KENNEDY: I think it's a toss up. I would not have gotten any notoriety if I were just a normal, straightforward, big-haired, mini-skirted DJ. But I think that there are some opportunities that I probably lost because of what I believe. In some ways being a conservative is helpful, though. I'm everybody's token libertarian buddy. This is sometimes irritating because people assume that they know me and what I believe before talking to me. They don't realize that they're being selfish and impractical, and that I really hold all the answers and can tell them the meaning of life. [Laughter]

TWQ: When did you become a conservative?

KENNEDY: Probably when I was fourteen or fifteen. It was just an evolution. It grew from sharing ideas with people I respected and thinking about what freedom is. I found that the best critical thinkers are conservatives. That doesn't mean that I agree with conservatives about everything.

TWQ: What are some issues on which you disagree?

KENNEDY: I've definitely become more of a philosophical libertarian in the last few years. I think that people should have the freedom to do what they want with their lives, regardless of whether somebody else finds it to be immoral. There shouldn't be as many laws when it comes to things like marijuana. Gay people should be allowed to marry—it's not up to moralists to decide who people love.

TWQ: What are some issues on which you are very conservative?

KENNEDY: I don't believe in the kind of strict, totalitarian gun control that we have in this country, and I believe in free trade and open markets. People should decide what's right for them. I believe in liberty. The government needs to step aside.

TWQ: What about taxes, which might be considered the quintessential Republican concern?

KENNEDY: People feel that so much is taken from them that they have lost control. They don't understand why so much money is being taken out of their paychecks. Why can't they make decisions as to how to spend their money themselves? I'd like to see an itemized tax return. You check where you want your money to go. We'd have a set amount that goes to schools, highways and police officers. The rest you decide for yourself. You decide if you want to put your money in schools and whether it goes to primary education or secondary education or perhaps to offset student loans. Or, you might want to put more money in defense or hiring more police officers.

TWQ: Why are most people in your business liberals?

KENNEDY: A lot of liberal issues are more glamorous and intellectually easier to understand. Sometimes conservatism is a matter of philosophy or a certain way of looking at things. But liberals see themselves as having this great enemy to defeat: block-headed conservatives who want to dictate values and kill animals. It's easier to jump on the bandwagon if there is a big enemy.

TWQ: In *Hey Ladies! Tales & Tips for Curious Girls*, you propose that men need prudes.

KENNEDY: Oh, they do. I think so many women have gotten the idea that being racy and loosey-goosey, and being forward and sexually revolting are the only ways to achieve your goals in life. There was a time when prudedom was a life sentence of killing time with needlepoint and cooking casseroles for church functions. But nowadays with AIDS and venereal diseases lurking in every salty girl's hope chest, boys and men alike are searching for unspoiled beauty. The modern-day prude has revolutionized restraint and once again made it socially desirable. It's OK to be a prude and hold your head up on the boulevard as if to say, "We of humble prurience and unconquerable libido find empowerment in Jane Austen and Egyptian cotton. We live for us."

TWQ: When you were growing up, were you one of the popular kids?

KENNEDY: Oh, God no. No. It's always a sweet justice for those of us who were not quite so perky and well endowed to see the other girls who were perfect in junior high take a different turn after high school, after they had already peaked. It's sad to see people peak in high school.

TWQ: You've said that you were the last virgin in high school. What was that like?

KENNEDY: My best friend, Kiki, and I were the only remaining virgins in our class when we were seventeen.

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Culture for Women?

Francine Prose urges "Hanging Up" (apologies to the Ephron sisters) on the TV show *Providence* and other silly manifestations of lowbrow culture for women:

"THE TROUBLE WITH this idea of women's culture is that, in this case, 'women's' is a euphemism for Bad, or at least Low-to-Middlebrow. Though it concerns relationships, *Anna Karenina* is not a women's novel. Anna Quindlen's novels are. To attach the word 'women's' to a cultural product is to devalue it; in the view of the larger culture, 'women's' is only a step above 'young adult.' Though no one will admit it, the prevailing wisdom is that women are stupid and narcissistic and desire childish, mindless entertainment."

~Francine Prose in the NEW YORK TIMES MAGAZINE

In her case it was partly due to her religious upbringing. I chose to remain a virgin in high school because it didn't seem prudent to go around risking pregnancy at sixteen or seventeen when you would have just as much fun doing other things (you know, like knitting and volunteering at animal shelters). It seemed a lot more fun *not* to have sex than to have to worry about getting a sitter or running out of food stamps to buy diapers nine months later. It was actually fun to remain a virgin. Instead of falling prey to pressure from boys and situations, I could pretty much do my own thing and not have to worry about how someone was going to perceive me, because boys are not quite honest when they talk about the girls they've conquered.

TWQ: You also wrote about your decision to stop drinking.

KENNEDY: I quit drinking at a very early age, fourteen. It wasn't like I got completely plastered one night and woke up the next day in Memphis. It was an accumulation of friendships that went south and relationships that never worked and seeing people throw their lives away drinking and doing drugs. I saw people waste their potential. It just didn't make any sense.

TWQ: And you took heat about this decision?

KENNEDY: Yeah. I mean it was always, "Why are you drinking Sprite? You don't even drive. You're not the designated driver." And, you know, for a little while I said, "Well, I have a virus, and my doctor told me not to drink." Which was true. But then I began to say, "Well, I don't need to. Why do *you* drink?"

TWQ: What do you say to kids about drinking?

KENNEDY: I know the issue of drinking is one of the biggest worries that keeps parents up at night—other than fluctuating interest rates. It's the thought of their kids losing it to drugs or alcohol. Unfortunately for parents, the kids make the decision about drinking. I ask girls what they get out of it. I don't preach to anyone. I just tell them why I prefer doing other things to drinking. It's not that I'm a teetotaler. I haven't gotten drunk since I was a kid, but I might have a half a glass of wine if I'm having a big meal. I just can't stand the feeling of being drunk. I don't put myself in that position anymore. And, it is a matter of self-respect. I'd rather go dancing. I'd rather go bowling.

TWQ: Do you regret not having gone to college?

KENNEDY: No. God no. I'd still like to go back someday or at least take classes. I'd like to get a degree eventually, and we'll see if that happens. But college wasn't right for me at the time. There's no way that I would have succeeded. I didn't have the attention span. I didn't have the desire to seriously work on school. I would have been wasting time.

TWQ: You admitted to a crush on Dan Quayle. Whom do you find sexy in the recent crop of presidential contenders?

KENNEDY: No one, unfortunately. It would just be lovely if someone was. Steve Forbes would have been great if he looked like Ewan McGregor, but he doesn't. I liked a lot of what he said. I can't quite get a read on George W. Bush yet. I think it's odd that people find him so intoxicating. Al Gore is not sexy. He looks as if he uses fake-hair-in-a-can that you can spray on your bald spot. I think Bill Bradley's athletic ability is attractive, but I think he's a big socialist and that's frightening. I have actually met McCain, and I like the way that he talked to people. He is a very genuine person. ◆

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A Jane for All Seasons

Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf? ***Ellen Wilson Fielding*** shows what the Bloomsbury bohemian did to the vicar's daughter from Bath. Judge for yourself, gentle reader

WAS THERE A *soupçon* of sapphic yearning when heroine Fanny Price—playing a vicar in a home theatrical!—was caressed by Miss Crawford in the new movie version of Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*?

Jane Austen is one of those women from the past who has both been co-opted by feminists and patronized for her lack of geopolitical interest. Of course, her unmarried state is a hopeful sign to feminists, and the injection of at least a hint of lesbianism into an Austen movie was inevitable.

But the politicization of Jane Austen began much earlier, at the conclusion of the suffragette era and the beginning of modern feminism, with that pivotal figure in modern female thought, Virginia Woolf. Woolf faced the problem that feminist lovers of books always face with Jane Austen—she writes so well, and is so much fun to read, that some way must be found to "save" her for private reading and academic study even though her plot lines run to standard romantic boy-meets-girl, boy-leaves-girl, boy-gets-girl formulas. In other words, feminists must distinguish Jane Austen from her successors in the romantic fiction genre in order to justify the pleasant habit of reading her.

They face this same problem with the Brontë sisters' slightly later entries, notably *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*. These are much more broodingly "romantic" works, but all those smoldering passions and broken conventions—or conventions teetering on the brink of being broken, as in the almost successful attempt at a bigamous marriage by Mr. Rochester in *Jane Eyre*—count as marks in the Brontës' favor. This is because spontaneity and elemental passions and lack of self-control and epatering the bourgeoisie are modern virtues.

And one other thing counts in the Brontës' favor: their selection of heroes or heroines precariously perched on the edges of middle-class respectability, and at times falling over the edge. Heathcliff, the foundling of obscure, possibly gypsy parentage, and the penniless orphan Jane Eyre (who tutors an illegitimate child of a French courtesan, no less, and fights off the mad mixed-blood Caribbean married to Mr. Rochester) are far removed from the more proper circles of Jane Austen's Bennets, Woodhouses, and Elliots.

It is in her (let us admit it) delightfully written *A Room of One's Own* that Woolf uses the Brontës and Jane Austen to develop a forthrightly feminist thesis: that historically, female social constraints and lack of financial independence and educational opportunities have prevented almost all gifted women throughout most of English history from competing on equal terms with men in literature. (Never mind that almost equally daunting drawbacks have prevented nearly all gifted males throughout most of history from making use of their talents as well. Misfortune is remarkably gender-blind.)

Virginia Woolf, like many non-religious authors of her day, valued the integrity of the written word with a religious fervor. She believed the novelist had a duty to subordinate his voice and concerns to the consistent development of his fictional characters. Woolf described Austen's "miraculous" freedom from resentment and frustration in her sphere—"I could not find any signs that her circumstances had harmed her work in the slightest.... Here was a woman about

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the year 1800 writing without hate, without bitterness, without fear, without protest, without preaching." Woolf concedes that this psychological balance permits Austen to approach a kind of creative perfection within the world of her novels.

But where Austen comes in for faint praise and even criticism is in that very acceptance of her limited experience. Not only did Austen have no opportunities to jaunt about Napoleonic Europe, sail the seven seas with her naval brother, or pursue parliamentary politics, she did not even betray a desire to do any of these things by covering any of these topics second-hand. Her heroines dispense baskets of food to the poor, but do not involve themselves in questions of land reform, the economic dislocations of the early Industrial Revolution, labor struggles or the extension of the suffrage.

Indeed, Austen's lightness, good humor, and mental balance, her easy negotiation of the conventions of her social class, contribute to her technical success but also keep her from that creative dissatisfaction with her lot that might have moved her, in Woolf's judgment, to reach out for a greater and larger world—pumping her brother, perhaps, for nautical recollections in sufficient detail to make them her own for literary purposes.

So Woolf's delight in Austen's confident style and rancor-free mind is tempered by her feeling that, after all, there is something slight and unweighty about Austen's work, so that her significance, though real, may owe much to her role as a Missing Link between Fanny Burney (a great early success story among female novelists in the generation before Austen's, and still a good read) and, well, Woolf's own more open, enlightened, liberated generation.

Alas, poor Jane gets it from both sides here, since the traditional manly man's reaction to her novels also tends toward the "where's the blood, where's the action?" school. Even childbirth very definitely occurs off-stage in a Jane Austen novel. Recall also Elizabeth Bennet's anxious nursing of her sister Jane's common cold (though anxiety over fairly wimpy complaints can more easily be forgiven when we remember that there were no antibiotics to handle wimpy complaints that deteriorated into things like pneumonia). And then there is Louisa in *Persuasion,* whose entire personality is permanently altered by a fall she suffers while jumping down the steps at the seaside resort of Rye. She is stunned, perhaps by some sort of concussion, but by the time she fully recovers (after more anxious nursing by most of the females in the novel), she has become markedly more timid, easily startled by noise, and fond of quiet.

THERE IS ANOTHER more forgiving, more admiring strand of feminist reaction to Austen, which seizes on her sometimes cool, acerbic humor and ironic detachment from most of her characters as evidence that she was satirizing society and the social conventions of her day. To be sure, she was doing that, to some extent. But from what angle, and with what purpose, was she laughing at people like Lady Catherine de Bourgh, Mrs. Bennet, Mr. Collins, Sir William Elliot and his daughter Elizabeth, or the insufferable clerical couple in *Emma*?

Some revisionists would like to believe that Austen was in some sense "deconstructing" her society as busily as she was constructing her characters —that she allowed them to condemn not only themselves, but by extension the entire world to which even her heroes and heroines comfortably accommodate themselves. In this ingenious way feminists can snuggle up in an armchair with *Emma* or *Pride and Prejudice* while deploring almost every convention, value, or article of faith that Austen herself not only was reared in but also accepted as her own.

C. S. Lewis wrote an essay on Jane Austen in which he called her the daughter of Samuel Johnson, thinking of the clarity and sharp edges of the moral vision they both shared. The feminists have got some of the picture right—Jane is the antithesis of treacly nineteenth century sentimentalism and its romantic descendants. Yet this is not because she rejects the conventions of society.

In fact, she was reared in the last years of that eighteenth century Johnsonian society against which the Romantics rebelled. The Romantics were the great individualists of their day, the ones who argued against general laws from an egocentrically particular vantage point ("I must follow my star! I have a right to be happy!"—that kind of thing). Austen's Anne Elliot, the most mature of all her heroines, did not believe she had a right to be happy either at someone else's expense or at the expense of societal conventions, even though they doubtless seemed sturdier then than they do now. Anne wished very much to be happy—as who does not?—yet denied herself the right to do so even at the relatively small cost of her godmother's disapproval of the dashing and impecunious yet respectable naval officer she loved.

Years later, after Anne has secured a hard-bought sense not of happiness but of contentment with her place in life and the fulfillment of her duties to friends and family, she continues to believe she would have been happier mar-

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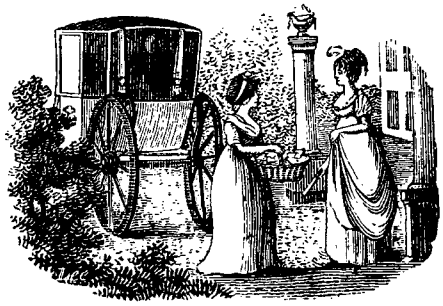
ried to her young naval officer, but not at the expense of violating the forcefully expressed views of her godmother. How much more conventional can you get? How less free to follow your star?

It is preposterous to conclude that because Anne's godmother gave her bad advice, Austen meant to call into question the entire traditional family and social structure, any more than we are to believe that because *Pride and Prejudice*'s Mrs. Bennet is silly and superficial, her children should feel free to mock and disobey her.

No, there is another reason (besides, of course, Austen's sharp eye and sense of fun) why Jane Austen's heroines are presented with so many silly authority figures. In their quest for an adult romantic destiny, issuing in a fruitful, stable, and, sustaining married life, her heroines are confronted with the female, bourgeois, early nineteenth century equivalent of hardships to undergo and dragons to slay to grow in wisdom and virtue and prove their worthiness. When Jane Austen temporarily deprives her heroines of the men they love, she is not only engaging in a suspense-building device, but demonstrating her heroines' worth, as they repent of bad choices and ill-chosen words, if need be, and commit themselves to better ones.

If this sounds almost as solemn and humorless as a feminist tract, we all know that Austen's novels easily avoid the comparison. They are acutely witty, since Austen delights in the manifold foibles and interactions of human creatures. Yet she is not afraid to judge her characters in very clearly defined moral terms, even as she skewers them as comic objects of derision.

One of the most striking examples of Austen's willingness to judge occurs



Jane Austen is neither a lightweight prisoner of her benighted times nor a deliciously devious mole bent on undermining her social system.

during the excursion to Box Hill in *Emma*, where Emma becomes intoxicated by her own wit and the playful attentions of Frank Churchill, and directs a cuttingly funny remark at the garrulous and simpleminded but good-natured impoverished gentlewoman Miss Bates. Emma's own properly formed conscience convicts her of insensitivity and impiety toward an elder, but she also suffers the privately expressed condemnation of a shocked and offended suitor, Mr. Knightley.

This scene marks the moral and educational turning point for Emma, as she faces the need to put aside childish things—her play-acting of the lady of the manor and regional matchmaker—and accept her real power to harm or help those around her. Only then, as a woman aware of responsibilities, consequences, and human limitations, can she qualify as a fit wife for Mr. Knightley. (Note, by the way, how many of Austen's heroines grow up without a mother's guidance, or hampered by a silly mother. They are left to look for role models among friends and relations who embody the best virtues of society. Only Anne Elliot, in *Persuasion*, seems to have no peer in judgment around her, though her godmother is, within the limitations of her worship of status, a good woman.)

The Box Hill episode is burned into my mind with special force because I first studied it in college when I and those around me were in much the same stage of development as Emma and Frank Churchill: vying for our places in a young, exuberant society, and intoxicated by the witty remarks that no sooner made their way to our brains than they were transmitted to our lips. Hurt feelings and misunderstandings were common, and so the real damage Emma did to Miss Bates—as real as the bullet that entered Prince Andre in *War and Peace*, though less fatal—was clear to me.

Unfortunately for the feminists, Jane Austen is neither a lightweight prisoner of her benighted times nor a deliciously devious mole bent on undermining her social system. She is a virtuoso novelist whose bedrock seriousness permits her to play entertainingly with the faults and foibles of those around her. The proof of her moral maturity is that she treats stupidity married with immorality (as in Lydia Bennet's elopement with Wentworth) very sharply, while stupidity married with generous good will receives the warm sunshine of good-humored ribbing from this worthy daughter of an Anglican clergyman. ◆

Essayist Ellen Wilson Fielding is an associate editor at the American Enterprise.

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Jane at the Movies: Hit or Ms.?

With a tip of the bonnet, movie critic James Bowman rates the Jane Austen movies

James Bowman's rating of the Austen movies—from one bonnet for perfectly ghastly to four bonnets for absolutely delightful—is based on overall quality and not just historical adaptation.

More even than most of the great writers of the past, Jane Austen is a creature of her time and place. One need only remember her most famous line—"It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife"—to see that. For the contemporary reader, that sunny yet bitingly ironic sentiment cries out to be read in a spirit of rebellion.

Yet it seems to me impossible for a careful reader to suppose that Jane Austen herself was a rebel. Her involvement in the world that she so memorably satirized was too complete. She lived and died without the benefit of Marx's Copernican revolution in social thought: "Philosophers have explained the world; the point, however, is to change it."

It was the stunning originality of that idea itself and not the crude and long-discredited economic theory to which it was attached that really did change the world forever. Indeed, it is almost impossible for us imaginatively to undo the change, and once again look at the world as Jane Austen saw it, as one who could be savagely critical of what she could scarcely have dreamed of changing, and ironically detached from what she embraced most intimately.

Why, then, are her novels still so popular? And why, in particular, was there such a spate of adaptations of them for the movies or television in the 1990s? The hopelessness of conveying anything like an authentic rendering of Jane Austen in a movie was already obvious in 1940, when Robert Z. Leonard produced a film adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice.*

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PRIDE AND PREJUDICE 1940

Starring Laurence Olivier and Greer Garson
Screenplay by Aldous Huxley

THIS FILM, STARRING Laurence Olivier and Greer Garson and written by Aldous Huxley, was introduced by a superimposition of flowing script: "It happened in old England. . . ." And this was for the benefit of an audience sixty years closer to Austen than we are!

In the novel, the Bennet girls remain tantalizingly silent about their father's banter at their expense; in the Leonard movie, however, they giggle delightedly—as if to say, "Oh, silly Daddy!"—when Mr. Bennet (Edmund Gwenn) says that he has told Mr. Bingley that "if he ran into five of the silliest girls in England, they would be my daughters."

PRIDE AND PREJUDICE 1995

BBC Television Miniseries

WHERE MR. BENNET was just a lovable old curmudgeon whom the girls thought funny but didn't take seriously in the Leonard film, Mr. Bennet, played by Benjamin Withrow, is far less lovable in the BBC's 1995 miniseries. Indeed, he exudes an air of patriarchal condescension. This is alleviated only slightly when Mr. Bennet exempts his two eldest daughters from the general censure, speaking not of five but of "three of the silliest girls in England."

This seems no more than the truth in reference to Mary, Kitty, and Lydia. Jane (Susannah Harker) and Elizabeth (Jennifer Ehle) are thus further isolated from the others, as they are by the extreme silliness of their mother (Alison Steadman, playing it to the hilt), which makes this version of the story almost more about the sisterly relationship than the relationships of the girls and their suitors. This is obviously a post-feminist Jane Austen.

The BBC screenplay, written by Andrew Davies, takes the "truth universally acknowledged" and puts it in Elizabeth's mouth, a sardonic comment on her mother's ready assumption, at the mere news of Mr. Bingley's coming into the neighborhood, that he will want to marry Jane. This emphasizes Elizabeth's cleverness and raised-consciousness in contrast to the foolishness of her grotesquely girlish mother. But it sacrifices the more stringent, Austenian irony that it is the mother, not the clever daughter, who turns out to have been right about Mr. Bingley.

MANSFIELD PARK 1999

Directed by Patricia Rozema

PATRICIA ROZEMA'S FILM of *Mansfield Park* was, in spite of some excellent performances and genuine insights into the text, an enormous disappointment. Rozema fell victim to the Merchant-Ivory syndrome, which is simply to impose on the past the template of the present: All the characters, good and bad, are stumbling about in the darkness of their old-fashioned opinions and assumptions until there appears among them an avatar of our own time to show them by example what history will require their descendants to become.

In Rozema's *Mansfield Park*, this is Fanny Price (Frances O'Connor). She holds a distinctively late twentieth-century view of the position of women in society and the iniquity of slavery. Her fictional job is to shame the others, in particular the slaveholder Sir Thomas Bertram (Harold Pinter), into modernity.

The result is that the Austenian themes of the novel are obscured if not altogether obliterated. This is a pity, as we are not really in any need of instruction that slavery was wrong or that women ought to be allowed to take responsibility for their own lives. Why must we so assiduously flog these long dead horses to squeeze from the exercise a modicum of moral self-congratulation?

Meanwhile, the moral difficulties with which Jane Austen did seriously grapple in the novel, in particular her uncompromising stand for a sincerity so pure that we should think it merely bizarre—participation in amateur dramatics is seen as a step on the slippery slope to moral debauchery!—are ignored.

Rozema is more successful at presenting to us another of the novel's main themes, because in this case Jane Austen comes down on our side: A poor girl is forced to weigh her duty to her family to better herself by marriage, against her own heart and her

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inward prospects of happiness. In the end, Fanny and Miss Austen both come down in favor of individualism, just as we do (and unlike, say, the dull and unattractive Charlotte Collins, *née* Lucas, in *Pride and Prejudice*). This allows Rozema to present Fanny's struggle with herself over the proposal of Henry Crawford (Alessandro Nivola) movingly and persuasively. We applaud Fanny's decision because we feel it is what moderns would do.

But to Jane Austen, as to Fanny and to the audience she created her for, the outcome would have been much more in doubt. A better film would have given us more of a sense of this delicate moral equipoise, the truly agonizing dilemma represented by a seeming altruism that is really corrupt and a seeming selfishness that is really virtuous. This dilemma is what made the novel so compelling for its nineteenth century readers.

PERSUASION 1995

Directed by Roger Michell

AUSTEN HERSELF WOULD doubtless be sorry to think that much of the hard work of moralizing which she regularly undertakes in her novels is simply disregarded by her readers nearly 200 years on, but in the case of the movies and TV versions of her work, that is a technological as well as a cultural phenomenon. Moralizing rarely comes across on the silver screen. For example, consider Roger Michell's version of *Persuasion* (screenplay by Nick Dear). Not surprisingly, given the title, the novel is about persuasion—that is to say, about how far those to whom we are bound by blood and kinship, or by friendship and weaker ties of loyalty, may be permitted to tell us what to do by guiding us in the courses of prudence and good sense.

Obviously such a question would be a complete dead bust in a novel or a movie of today. The answer is self-evident: Not at all. For us, Lady Russell, who in the novel persuaded Anne Elliott not to marry Captain Wentworth when they were younger, is simply an interfering old cow who ought to be sent packing. Jane Austen did not think this. For Austen, Lady Russell's advice was mistaken—but only because Anne's feelings persisted and the captain went on to become successful and rich.

We also have before our eyes the example of poor Louisa Musgrove, whom the captain, now returned from the wars, looks like settling on instead: Louisa is younger and has the independence of mind and spirit that Anne so sadly lacks. The captain has to learn that the excess of these admirable qualities amounts to headstrong obstinacy and is a Very Bad Thing in a woman you plan to marry. Oh dear, oh dear. This will never do.

At the risk of making viewers wonder where the title came from, Dear and Michell sever all connection, thematically, with the business of persuasion. Louisa Musgrove becomes just a shallow, little fool. Anne's love story develops into Everywoman's romance: the dream of being loved for oneself alone (as Yeats wrote in "For Anne Gregory," "...only God, my dear/ Could love you for yourself alone/And not your yellow hair") by a man whom youth and beauty cannot lure from one's side nor ill-treatment drive away.

It is a sure-fire, can't lose dramatic proposition, as much today as it was 200 years ago. But to take the romance of Jane Austen in isolation from most of the moralizing is to make her into a manufacturer of myths of female empowerment within a hostile and dangerous system, in effect a superior sort of romance novelist.

CLUELESS 1995

Starring Alicia Silverstone

BY AN ACCIDENT of history, the most complex and subtle of Jane Austen's novels, *Emma*, is also the one whose moral universe is still most recognizable. Her use of dramatic irony and point of view in this novel was decades ahead of its time, and none of this can be translated into cinematic terms. But morally speaking we are still very much on the same page with one who insists that wealth, beauty, social position, and cleverness do not give anyone godlike powers to intervene in the lives of other people, even with the best of intentions.

Emma's self-conceit as being "in the know" and in control of everything that is going on in Highbury is as recognizable today as it was 200 years ago. That is why this is the only novel that was adapted not once but three times during the 1990s, if you count Amy Heckerling's delightful translation of the action to a contemporary high school in Beverly Hills in *Clueless*. But *Clueless* also shows how little the cinematic versions of *Emma* need have to do with the novel, and therefore how far they are from the world in which the novel was imagined.

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EMMA 1997

Starring Gwyneth Paltrow

IN DOUGLAS MCGRATH'S film version of the novel, the first thing we see is a small blue globe spinning rapidly against a background of stars as the opening credits come up. Gradually the camera pulls in, the globe gets bigger and slows down until we see that its entire continental land mass is in the shape of a gigantic England, on whose virgin expanse are two neat labels: "London" and "Highbury." Then we see the principal characters done as miniatures of the period but strung out through the blue ocean as if they were an archipelago. The globe then merges with the film itself in the form of a little painted globe on a string given as a wedding gift from Emma (Gwyneth Paltrow) to Mrs. Weston (Greta Scacchi), her former governess. Like one of those Steinberg cartoons for the *New Yorker* of the view from New York, this is meant to suggest not only Emma's smug sense of her own importance within her little world but also Jane Austen's within hers and perhaps even Britain's in the post-Napoleonic world.

This is not quite fair to Austen. There is a big difference between people who have the arrogance to believe that the entire world consists of the little patch they know and those who have the modesty not to presume to write of the vast expanse beyond their ken. The real arrogance belongs to our culturally imperialist times and those who lack that modesty, and who patronize the past for not making the same easy assumption we make that our view of things is world-encompassing. It is a particularly ironic failing in those who presume to adapt *Emma*. McGrath's film has many virtues, but even the cinematic *Mansfield Park* gives us a better idea of what life would really have been like for the people in whom Jane Austen has made us take an interest.

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY 1995

Directed by Ang Lee
Starring Emma Thompson

THE BEST OF the cinematic Janeites, in my view, are Ang Lee (director) and Emma Thompson (writer and star) whose *Sense and Sensibility* starts out with the great advantage that this is the simplest of the novels. (And the next best, the BBC's 1995 *Pride and Prejudice*, takes the next simplest.) Oddly, the best films are made out of the second-best novels. Lee and Thompson not only get right the romance trappings, common to all the novels, but also manage to preserve something of the moralizing dichotomy of the title.

Of course, the translation isn't perfect: Jane Austen's Marianne is passionate on principle, Kate Winslet's only by temperament. This in turn gives Emma Thompson's Elinor little to do beyond the practical tasks involved in cleaning up Marianne's messes and waiting with diminishing hope for her own, much less dashing dream man, played by Hugh Grant, to arrive. When at length he does, it is at the very moment when she has at last given up all hope of him, and the sudden shock of happiness finally shakes to pieces Elinor's rock-solid composure on which everyone else has been relying. She bursts into uncontrollable sobs which it is impossible to watch unmoved.

There are many other terrific scenes in this richly textured movie whose photography so effectively echoes its theme, being divided between the elegant, painterly interiors of "sense" and "sensibility's" Romantic natural scenes that appear to have been modeled on Constable or even Turner. One of the best comes when Marianne is recovering from her fever. We have the obligatory reminder of primitive medical technique with a shot of a leech at work on the fevered girl's arm and a call for more laudanum. Poor Colonel Brandon (Alan Rickman), whose self-dramatizing melancholy (like Marianne's romanticism) is taken just up to the borderline of ludicrousness, sticks his head in the door after having brought her mother. He has been bringing her things with no or perfunctory thanks throughout and is about to slink from the door when Marianne stops him. Now in her right mind, both literally and metaphorically, she says meaningfully: "Thank you, Colonel."

The look on his face alone is worth the price of admission. It is a great romantic moment, but it also demonstrates an almost Janean sense of decorum. Like the morality which it champions, such filmmaking puts the highest value on passion contained by reticence and restraint, and so it brings us as close as we are likely to get to what Jane Austen intended us to experience in her novels. ◆

James Bowman is the film critic for the American Spectator. *His reviews are available Thursdays on www.spectator.org.*

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GET REAL, JANE

Mark Lasswell shows how Jane Austen can be made relevant for today's woman. Move over, Danielle Steele!

Tina Brown (left) introduces Jane Austen at a Manhattan cocktail party

NOTE FROM THE PUBLISHER:

In recent years, the works of Jane Austen have enjoyed a tremendous resurgence of popularity—at least in their incarnations as movies starring Emma Thompson and Gwyneth Paltrow. But what about Jane's actual books? Alas, the novels themselves remain mired in precious early-nineteenth-century prose ("shewn" for "shown," we're not kidding!) and are stuffed with an antique morality that makes modern American readers scream: "MEGO!" (My Eyes Glaze Over). Then her would-be fans say, "Me go to Jane Austen movie instead."

Until now! Bantam-Doubleday-AOL-Time-Warner-Yahoo!-Bertlesmann-Monsanto-Dell Books is proud to unveil *The Millennial Jane Austen.* This collector's edition, its bindings handcrafted in the finest tradition of the leatherette trade, includes all six of Austen's most famous novels, adapted to the more demanding "sense and sensibility" of the contemporary audience. Yes, we're full of "pride" and are plenty "prejudiced," but we don't think you'll need much "persuasion" to agree that our careful updating of these classics honors the intentions of the great Ms. Austen while appealing to her countless newfound enthusiasts (like you!) in the United States.

With *The Millennial Jane Austen,* here's what you get: exciting plots and modern American heroines who could have stepped right out of the pages of last month's *Vogue.* Here's what you don't get: plodding stories and convoluted sentences that, frankly, help explain why Jane had such a hard time finding a publisher.

Sound enticing? Here's a sneak preview:

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Pride and Prejudice

Elizabeth Bennet, one of five sisters, is her father's favorite. The sparkling sense of humor they share seems to have been forged long ago, almost secretly, in her childhood. When Mr. Bennet suffers financial setbacks and it becomes apparent that his daughters will be homeless upon his death, Elizabeth sets out to find a husband. Despite her aims, she resists marriage proposals from two suitors, instead focusing her attention, improbably, on Darcy, a distant, arrogant man to whom she had taken an instant dislike. Troubled by her attraction to someone who makes her unhappy, and by her inability to maintain a relationship with more considerate and emotionally integrated males, Elizabeth seeks counseling. With the help of the kindly Sharon Prodd, Ph.D., Psych., Harvard, '83, Elizabeth discovers the horrible but cleansing truth of her relationship with her father: He physically abused Elizabeth and the other Bennet girls in childhood, forcing them into a satanic cult—headed by the Wiccan Lady Catherine de Bourgh—that practiced the importation and ritual slaughter of emperor penguins with sharpened needle-nose pliers. After many tears, the other Bennet girls finally admit to Dr. Prodd that they, too, have recovered memories of their father's abuse. Although Mr. Bennet has no assets, an attorney whom the Bennet girls consult at Dr. Prodd's suggestion tells them that their father's insurance is likely to cover any awards made in a lawsuit charging him with violating their civil rights. The novel ends with the Bennet sisters awash in cash, their futures secure, and their romantic lives no longer held in thrall to the economic oppression of the patriarchy.

Emma

Swearing that she will never marry, Emma Woodhouse nevertheless delights in using her considerable charm and ingenuity to mastermind the romances of others. At first, Emma's neglect of her own love life, while attending to the mating habits of half the population of the village Highbury, results in many wonderfully comic misunderstandings and cases of mistaken identity. But then the pawns in Emma's games end up in committed, monogamous relationships, and she has fewer and fewer sources of amusement. As the years pass, Emma begins to regret her vow never to marry—but then realizes, as her fortieth birthday approaches, that what she truly regrets is never having had a child. She visits a friend, Dr. Perry, at the Highbury Fertility and Late-Term Freedom of Choice Health Center, to inquire about artificial insemination. While at the clinic, she fails to recognize one of the nurses, Jane Fairfax, whose courtship with Frank Churchill many years earlier had been the object of Emma's intriguing. Once a happy, attractive young woman who adored music, now Jane is depressed and overweight, trapped in a nightmarish marriage to Frank, who plays the piano in a seedy lounge, is addicted to cocaine, and emotionally abuses his wife. Jane vows to take revenge upon learning that her former friend is seeking a sperm donor. Without spoiling the ending, suffice it to say that the young Emma would have laughed uproariously in appreciation of a dizzying last chapter that involves a Kozmo.com delivery boy posing as an Ob-Gyn, a middle-of-the-night visit to the offices of the Bovine Breeders' Association of Highbury, and a petri dish mistaken for the new lip-gloss from L'Oréal.

Mansfield Park

Fanny Price has lived in the magnificent mansion at Mansfield Park since the age of ten, when her impoverished parents in Portsmouth, N.H., sent her to live in Boston with the family of her mother's well-married sister. Fanny grows into a young woman accustomed to moving in the wealthy circles of her uncle, Thomas Bertram, a millionaire senator with a large estate and vast holdings in Colorado and Montana. On a lark—undertaken with the casual indifference to consequences typical of the spoiled elite—Fanny returns to Portsmouth to visit her parents. Initially embarrassed by their poverty, Fanny is gradually filled with indignation at the disparity between rich and poor, and nauseated by her own unwitting collaboration with the unfairly advantaged. She is especially outraged by her parents' inability to find affordable medical insurance. Fired with the ideal of nurturing every member of society, and of never resting until the establishment of a government bureaucracy to ensure the reasonable pricing of prescription drugs (note our heroine's last name!), Fanny returns to Mansfield Park a changed woman. Though ashamed of harboring carnal thoughts, Fanny resolves to seduce Republican Senator Bertram in the service of a greater good. Her intention is to pillow-talk him into supporting President Bill

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Bradley's health-care bill and its companion $17 billion tax hike. Fanny "ministers" to Bertram so effectively that he switches parties. Later elected president, Bertram appoints Fanny health czar.

Persuasion

We join Anne Elliot eight years after a devastating moment in her life: breaking off her engagement to Captain Wentworth of the U.S. Navy. Now twenty-seven years old and still deeply regretting her decision, Anne vows to find Captain Wentworth and tell him that she loves him still. Anne visits a naval recruiting center, enlists for a three-year hitch, and sets out on a world-girding search for her beloved. With the help of the kindly Henrietta Musgrove, a sturdy research technician in a low-maintenance hairdo, Anne discovers that Captain Wentworth has been posted to the nuclear submarine *U.S.S. Roger Clinton.* Anne despairs —submarine crews are male-only— but Ensign Musgrove comforts her new friend and angrily denounces the Navy for its "gender fascism." This emboldens Anne to challenge naval policy, and with Henrietta's help every step of the way, she fights a public battle with the Pentagon over its submarine personnel policies. When Anne is assailed on all sides (save for high-profile support from the Beverly Hills chapter of People for the Ethical Treatment of Women), Henrietta suggests that she join Anne in her fight to serve on the *Roger Clinton.* "Why would you do this, invite so much trouble for yourself?" Anne asks. Henrietta replies, "Don't ask." "I won't tell," Anne says reassuringly, but to no avail. Still, she is deeply moved that a friend would so selflessly volunteer to be one of only two women on board a vessel that remains below the ocean surface for months at a time. Anne's memories of Captain Wentworth begin to fade as her fight drags on, but she almost doesn't care about their failed romance anymore—she's fighting now for principle...and for Ensign Musgrove.

Northanger Abbey

The first line of this novel beautifully captures the powerful theme of *Northanger Abbey*: "No one who had ever seen Catherine Morland in her infancy, would have supposed her to be born a lesbian." Those who saw Catherine in childhood might have had a clue: Scorning the usual schoolgirl hobbies of pampering a dormouse or tending rose bushes, she throws herself into boys' games and would rather roll down a hill than curl her hair. As Catherine grows older, observers might also have wondered about her "romance" with Henry Tilney, who's steeped in women's fiction and displays a lovely taste in fabrics. Indeed, Catherine herself doesn't know her true feelings until a friendship with Isabella Thorpe slowly reveals itself to both young women as erotic love. Catherine and Isabella first bond over their shared interest in gothic fiction ("...if a rainy morning deprived them of other enjoyments, they were still resolute in meeting in defiance of wet and dirt, and shut themselves up, to read novels together"). But then one day they open the work of Rita Mae Brown, and soon find themselves meeting in defiance of scandalized parents and angry boyfriends. Catherine and Isabella retreat to a commune called Northanger Abbey, where they are welcomed into a caring community of sturdy women in low-maintenance hairdos.

Sense and Sensibility

This story tracks the romantic lives of two young women, the level-headed but deep-feeling Elinor Dashwood and her emotionally self-indulgent sister, Marianne. When heartache sets in for both, Marianne dramatically takes to bed, while Elinor puts on a brave face. A friend, Mrs. Jennings, hopes to comfort Marianne with a glass of wine, but when she arrives too late—Marianne is already asleep—Elinor intercepts the glass. The wine's "healing powers on a disappointed heart," Austen writes, "might be as reasonably tried on herself as on her sister." So begins Elinor's descent into weepy, alcohol-soaked despair. She scrapes bottom one night when her Caller ID reveals that the beloved Edward Ferrars telephoned without leaving a message; though well into her third bottle of wine, Elinor rushes to Ferrars' apartment and rings the bell. When the door opens, she only manages to burble, "Oh, darling," before splashing more than a liter of cabernet sauvignon and a serving of Lean Cuisine chicken Kiev across his house slippers. "Damn it, Elinor, you have a disease!" Ferrars shouts. With Marianne's help, he persuades Elinor to enter detox. The novel ends with our heroine haggard but happy, bravely uttering these stirring words to a circle of new friends: "My name is Elinor ...." ◆

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Vegan Feminism

John Dizard asks, Where's the beef?

Brothers have all sorts of ways of bonding. We go hunting together. We help get each other's kids into schools. We share matrimonial lawyers. And, in my family, we give each other feminist books for laughs. I gave one of my brothers a book called *Dykes to Watch Out For* as a houseguest gift last year. Big hit. And my youngest brother, figuring I'd missed the first, 1990 edition of *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory*, by Carol J. Adams, gave me the Tenth Anniversary Edition last Christmas.

Usually the title, the cover illustrations, and the first five or ten pages are more than enough, but Carol Adams' seminal work, if that's the word I'm looking for, called for closer attention. At the very beginning she excitedly announces that "I struck upon the idea of *the texts of meat.*" (Italics original)

The texts of meat. Brilliant. To the feminist, vegetarian, postmodernist, literary, critical community, an Idea such as that goes far beyond quantum mechanics, the germ theory of disease, or the Internet. The key insight of these folks transcends traditional divisions of left and right, both of which have relied, more or less successfully, on the study of material reality. Reality—you know, verifiable facts deduced from reproducible experiments, the direct observation and measurement of natural phenomena, or historical record. What the fem-veg-po-mo-lit-crit people understand is that metaphor is every bit as good as analysis and unsupported assertions in their "text" can substitute for fact.

We guys watch James Bond to find out what would happen if the weird, tormented guy in the back of the class grew up to become a villain intent on world domination. Now, if we want to know what would happen if unhinged, underemployed, angry, female, English majors were to try and take over the world, we have *The Sexual Politics of Meat.*

Mind you, Carol Adams figured there'd be guys like me. Criticism, which she refers to as "textual violation," is compared to rape (for feminist writers), or lynching (for black women writers). "A vegetarian writer may express feelings about textual violation by referring to images of butchered animals and raising the issue of dismemberment."

But if Carol must contend with articles such as this one, written presumably by men in bloody aprons, she has at least freed herself of the weight of facts. Or real facts, anyway. For example, she claims that "it is a very important fact that the hidden majority of the world has been primarily vegetarian." No, Carol, it isn't. Then, in the entertaining chapter called "The Rape of Animals, the Butchering of Women," Carol calls on feminists to "go into the kitchen and consider not only 'who [men] beat', but 'who we [she means feminists] eat."

"In incorporating the fate of animals we would encounter these issues: the relationship between imperialism and meat eating in imposing a 'white' diet of meat eating on the dietary folkways of people of color." Say what? Does she mean that before the white man arrived in Africa, Australia, the Americas, or Asia, these lands were populated by vegetarians? I don't think so. Oh, and by the way, how come both men and women have teeth that are adapted to tearing flesh or eating meat? It would seem she considers critics, or dismemberers, who point out that animals eat other animals, to be unworthy of her notice.

We can hope that these and other issues will be taken up in Carol's current book project, *Living Among Meat Eaters.* She does promise that in that work she will "further explore the dynamic that impels people to protect their own meat eating by clinging to the idea of Hitler's 'vegetarianism.'"

You would expect *The Sexual Politics of Meat* to get an enthusiastic endorsement by Andrea Dworkin, and it did. But if you thought this was the product of an isolated, self-published lunatic you would be partly wrong. "An important and provocative work"—*Library Journal*; "An intelligent polemic...thoughtful and thought-provoking"—*Kirkus Reviews*; "Original, provocative"—*Publishers Weekly*; "A clearheaded scholar... her argument is rational and persuasive"—*Washington Post.*

I thought I'd topped my younger brothers with my find of *Dykes to Watch Out For.* But I have to admit, it was trumped by *The Sexual Politics of Meat.* ◆

Financial writer John Dizard lives in New York.

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The Beijing Brigade

Christine Stolba shows how stealth bureaucrats are turning the UN's Beijing Platform on Women into law

"WOMEN'S RIGHTS ARE human rights, and human rights are women's rights," Hillary Rodham Clinton stated five years ago in Beijing. When Clinton cloaks herself in the vague and bulletproof language of "human rights," you just know something's up.

The seemingly irrefutable pearl of wisdom above was dropped at the United Nation's fabled Fourth World Conference on Women—the very one at which Hillary Clinton's allies strove mightily to replace the retro terms "mother" and "family" with the more *au courant* "caregiver" and "household" in the "Platform for Action" that eventually emerged.

The "Platform for Action," signed by 189 countries, including the United States, is, in theory, a non-binding, international statement of the world's commitment to equality for women. In practice, however, the platform has served as a vehicle for the advancement of a particular vision of equality for women, one informed by radical feminism. With the socially acceptable language of "human rights" as their sheep's clothing, Beijing backers have gone about their wolf's work of advancing their agenda both within the UN and through the executive branch agencies of the U.S. government. The Clinton administration has, as we'll see, pursued the path of "institutional change," or bureaucratic stealth, which takes place behind closed doors.

The Platform for Action is the most forceful expression ever made of global feminism and a veritable Rosetta Stone for ascertaining the goals of the feminist community in the U.S. It is innocuously worded—its supporters claim that it is an uncontroversial, selfless statement of good intentions. Some of what the Beijing Platform recommends is reasonable, even laudable: equal access to education, the ballot box, and credit, and the freedom to pick one's own spouse. Almost hidden in the deliberately impenetrable language, however, are proposals that give pause. For example, the platform calls for "mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programs" and into "all spheres of society." What does "mainstreaming gender perspectives" entail?

The platform, an unwieldy and repetitive document, bears the imprint of pampered, Western feminist notions of equality. Mary Ann Glendon, the Harvard law professor who represented the Vatican at the Beijing confab, wrote in the *Los Angeles Times* that Beijing was dominated by "those who want to lace all women into the corset of outmoded feminism."

For example, although the platform devotes little attention to female litera-

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cy, it repeatedly calls for the advancement of "gender equality" through "the promotion of women's studies and through the use of the results of studies and gender research in all fields, including the economic, scientific, and technological fields." The platform calls on governments to "provide leadership and self-esteem training to assist women and girls." Boys, too, are to benefit from "gender-sensitive training" that will instill in them a "respect for diversity."

The Beijing platform sees enemies of women's equality lurking worldwide in teachers' lounges and textbooks. "Curricula and teaching materials remain gender-biased to a large degree," the platform says, and teachers untrained in gender sensitivity "undermine girls' self esteem." Sex education is also high on the UN agenda for women. Girls require "sexual and reproductive health education," and, if that fails, an educational setting that "eliminates all barriers that impede the schooling of pregnant adolescents and young mothers."

The platform further seeks "a radical transformation of the relationship between men and women to one of full and equal partnership." Equality is desirable—but "radical transformation?" One begins to get the distinct impression that this might be one platform that's against motherhood—and other things most people see as normal. Indeed, power begins at home for the Beijing platform, and the fact that women bear the brunt of domestic responsibilities worldwide is seen as a major barrier to equality. The platform sends the message that women are not full citizens until they are fully employed in the paid labor force.

Hillary Clinton recently reinforced this message. What women want, Clinton said, is to "have a chance to work and earn as full and equal partners in society." But family responsibilities often hamper that goal. As Clinton noted, "Women are the primary caretakers of the world's children and elderly. Yet much of the work we do is not valued—not by economists, not by historians, not by popular culture, not by government leaders." Although the first lady neglected to mention that families themselves might value women's care and attention, she did see promise in the policies of other nations. She was particularly taken with government-subsidized Danish day care, remarking that "I have met working parents in Denmark who talk about the comfort they feel in knowing that their children can be cared for in creative, safe, and nurturing after-school centers."

At Beijing, families were discussed mainly in terms of the barriers they erect to women's progress. The measure of equality for women in the Beijing Platform is economic independence and freedom *from* families. Benazir Bhutto, then-prime minister of Pakistan, noted in her opening address at Beijing that "the platform is disturbingly weak on the role of the traditional family." The words "mother" and "family" remained in the final document only through a rancorous negotiation process during which pro-family and religious groups raised repeated objections to their deletion.

While Hillary Clinton reminded those gathered at the Beijing talkathon that "those of us who have the opportunity to be here have the responsibility to speak for those who could not," Bhutto wasn't the only person for whom they did not speak. Many countries registered displeasure similar to Bhutto's. The Argentine delegation noted that they understood the concept of family as "the union of a man and a woman, who produce, nourish, and educate their children," while Egypt reaffirmed that "the family is understood to be the basic unit of society."

The most forceful objection to the platform's concept of the family came from the delegation of the Vatican, which expressed disappointment that the platform nowhere recognized that "the family is the basic unit of society and is based on marriage as an equal partnership between husband and wife."

Moreover, the platform calls for ideological public policy measures such as wage-setting (the government rather than the market setting wages), affirmative action, and government-funded day care. For example, governments should "reformulate the wage structures in female-dominated professions, such as teaching and nursing and child care, with a view to raising their low status and earnings" and "commit themselves to establishing the goal of gender balance in governmental bodies, as well as in public administrative entities, and in the judiciary." Lest one misunderstand the meaning of "gender balance," the platform notes that this means participation "in the same proportion and at the same levels as men." Statistical parity—international quotas!—is the true goal.

For the past five years, international activists have been using the Beijing platform to try to create a form of international law—binding, "customary" law—from a nonbinding agreement. In their view (one embraced by the American feminist community) "human rights" trump all other rights. As a result, "human rights" documents such as the Beijing platform are viewed as transcending parochial strictures

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(including religious beliefs, cultural norms, and even national sovereignty concerns) because they pursue "international justice" for women. But as the Beijing document reveals, this community confuses human rights with interest group demands.

As the sampling of Beijing recommendations suggests, the goal of "mainstreaming a gender perspective" is all-encompassing—meant to affect every facet of society, from a nation's foreign policy to who's taking out the trash at home. Both implicitly and explicitly, the platform clashes with American law and policy. In theory this should not be a problem because of the oft-mentioned nonbinding status of the statement.

However, in the hands of the Clinton administration and American feminist organizations, Beijing "recommendations" are presented as binding "commitments," and have been promoted systematically as such throughout the executive branch of the federal government. In August 1995, on the eve of the Beijing Conference, President Clinton created the "President's Interagency Council on Women" to coordinate "the implementation of the Platform for Action ...including the U.S. commitments announced there." Hillary Clinton is the council's honorary chair, Health and Human Services Secretary Donna Shalala is the immediate past chair, and Secretary of State Madeleine Albright serves as the current chair, a post she has held since 1997. "High-level representatives from executive branch agencies" comprise the rest of the council.

The Interagency Council's activities during the past five years are well-documented in their report, "America's Commitment: Federal Programs Benefiting Women and New Initiatives as Follow-Up to the UN Fourth World Conference on Women." The devil is usually in the details, but in the case of the Interagency Council's report, it is right out in the open. The report supports Hillary Clinton's post-Beijing boast that "the United States is not just paying lip service to the Beijing platform, but acting on it."

A GLIMPSE OF those actions gives new meaning to the phrase "wasteful government expenditure." At Housing and Urban Development, for example, the Clinton administration is "bringing Beijing home" through the production of a video titled *Ain't I a Woman?*, a cinematic gem that provides "HUD policymakers and the public with a 'gendered' perspective on public housing"—whatever that is. Over at the Department of Transportation, federal money is being spent to establish "transit centers" near bus and train stations where "women can drop their children off at reliable day care centers, do banking, complete errands, or get medical attention on their way to or from work." The Transportation Department is also pouring funds into a "Women in Construction" initiative to lure more women into "highway construction trades."

Other initiatives directly enlist the aid of feminist organizations. The Department of Labor is sponsoring an outreach program that calls on the expertise of the National Organization for Women and the National Committee on Pay Equity. The latter organization, well known for its ideological bias, has also been assisting the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs in ferreting out pay disparities in the U.S. As part of its commitment to women's equality after Beijing, the Department of Education has given millions of dollars in grant money to organizations such as the National Women's Law Center (a public-interest law firm that promotes feminist causes) to "promote gender equity."

At the U.S. Agency for International Development, federal employees may find themselves in hot water if they fail to implement the agency's Gender Plan of Action, which states that "attention to gender issues will be part of the evaluation process used by staff and committees rating the performance of civil service and foreign service personnel." Finally, as evidence of its commitment to the Beijing Platform, the Department of Justice cited its enforcement of the Violence Against Women Act of 1994 (a feminist pork barrel project, the constitutionality of which is currently being reviewed by the Supreme Court) and the lawsuits it brought against the Virginia Military Institute and the Citadel (which forced the schools to terminate their single-sex traditions).

But the most alarming effort to "bring Beijing home" is taking place at the State Department, where Secretary of State (and current Interagency Council chair) Madeleine Albright has vowed to integrate the Platform for Action into American foreign policy. "Advancing the status of women is not only a moral imperative," Albright said at an event commemorating the Beijing Conference, "it is being actively integrated into the foreign policy of the United States. It is our mission."

Albright has been actively pursuing this mission of "mainstreaming the gender perspective" during her tenure at the State Department. In February, 1999, the State Department's Office of Resources, Plans, and Policy completed an "international affairs strategic plan" that institutionalized Albright's gender mandates. The plan

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outlines the State Department's "priority areas" of "eliminating violence against women and increasing women's political and economic participation," and notes that these are all "part of Secretary Madeleine K. Albright's mandate to integrate issues affecting women into U.S. foreign policy." This is an effort that expends considerable resources; as the President's Interagency Council told the UN in response to a recent Beijing platform questionnaire, Albright's strategic plan "has a profound effect on policy development and resource allocation" in the State Department.

This is particularly disturbing if one returns to the text that Madame Albright and her minions are making State Department policy. One of the strategic goals of the Beijing Platform is for signatory nations to reduce "excessive military expenditures," including arms production, "so as to permit the possible allocation of additional funds for social and economic development, in particular for the advancement of women." The platform's feeble acknowledgement of "legitimate national defense needs" does little to temper its main message: fewer weapons and more gender mainstreaming. Such a policy has serious implications for national security.

The Clinton administration intends to continue using the Beijing platform as a rhetorical weapon in the battle for its domestic policy agenda. To wit: In response to a 1999 UN questionnaire, the President's Interagency Council claimed that "the current administration will work towards creating a more comprehensive childcare agenda; passing additional legislation to narrow the wage gap; expanding the Family and Medical Leave Act; and supporting the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)." The last item is a binding "human rights" convention.

Last October, Rep. Lynn Woolsey (D-CA) and nine fellow congressional femmes stormed into Jesse Helms' (R-NC) Senate Foreign Relations Committee room to demand hearings on the convention. Helms hasn't held hearings because he regards the convention as a threat to U.S. sovereignty.

The Clinton administration intends to continue using the Beijing platform as a rhetorical weapon.

Woolsey fumed that Helms was "holding the UN Convention hostage." Helms had the Capitol Hill police escort the disruptive dames from the room, a sensible decision that nevertheless was described in a National Organization for Women "Action Alert" as "the outrageous act of ousting ten female members of Congress from the hearing room." NOW carped that "adding insult to the abrupt treatment, Helms told Rep. Woolsey to 'Act like a lady!'" At the invitation of Clinton spinner Ann Lewis, the ladies decamped to the White House, where they received kudos and a pledge of support from Madeleine Albright.

In their speeches, Hillary Clinton, Madeleine Albright, and other Beijing boosters invoke democratic principles as the driving force behind their efforts to "bring Beijing home." Ironically, the Beijing Platform is neither the result of a democratic process nor subject to the moderation of one. The Clinton administration's efforts to implement Beijing amount to an end run around democracy. While traditional treaties and conventions are subject to approval by the Senate, the Beijing Platform is not.

Americans are wisely skeptical of their own government's attempts to meddle in their affairs; they should be no less wary of the UN's attempts to do so. In addition to its dubious ideological principles, the Beijing Platform and its sister documents such as CEDAW raise serious sovereignty issues. If the United States is going to subject itself to the dictates of international organizations such as the UN, then we should at least insist that those organizations abide by democratic rules of process and use findings based on facts, not ideology.

But the last word has not been said. Two thousand women from around the world will gather at United Nations headquarters in New York City in June for "Women 2000: Beijing Plus Five," to assess the progress of the Beijing Platform for Action. With a rigid notion of "international justice" (gender quotas), and rigid measures of "progress" (absolute statistical parity in all fields), the feminists behind the Beijing Platform stand ready to condemn countries and cultures around the world and at home for their "human rights" failures. If, as the Chinese proverb says, the journey of a thousand miles begins with one step, then this first step at Beijing suggests a troubling thousand miles ahead. ◆

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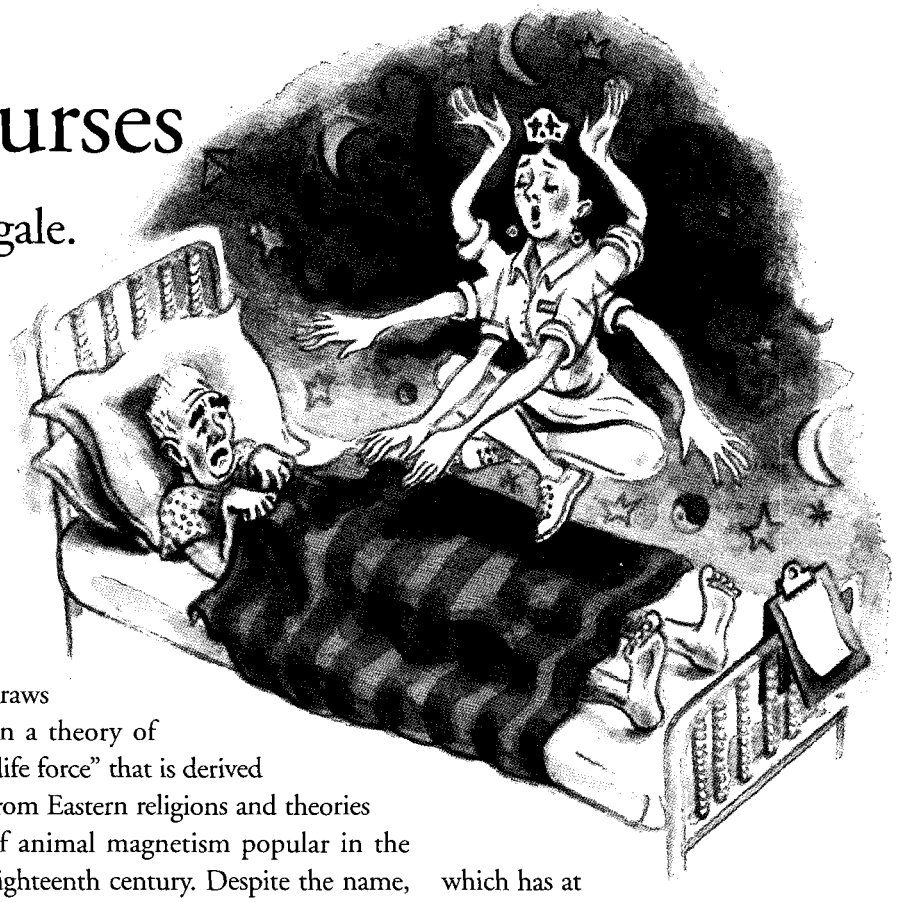
New Age Nurses

Forget Florence Nightingale. *Sally Satel* and *Dónal P. O'Mathúna* introduce the existential nurse. It's a touchy subject



In the summer of 1998, a group of nurses gathered at a university in New England for a graduate-level class. Just as the class was ending, a groundskeeper, who had been working in the heat, stumbled in and said he was feeling faint. Earlier in the week, he added, he had suffered a severe blow to the head. Full of concern, the nurses jumped into action.

Numerous pairs of hands began hovering a few inches from the stricken man's body, as the nurses assessed his "human energy field." One informed him that what he really needed was "a good cry." Finally, another thought to put together the symptoms and the recent head trauma. He urged that the groundskeeper be rushed to the hospital emergency room, where he was treated for a potentially life-threatening blood clot that was forming around his brain.

The sensible graduate nurse who suggested the emergency room was merely acting as any trained nurse would. The heart-stopping question is: What on earth were the others, all professionals, doing?

The answer is Therapeutic Touch, or TT, as it is known. Promoted in the 1970s by Dolores Krieger, a professor of nursing at New York University, TT draws on a theory of "life force" that is derived from Eastern religions and theories of animal magnetism popular in the eighteenth century. Despite the name, practitioners don't actually touch the patient: They move their hands near the patient in an attempt to manipulate the "energy field" they believe surrounds and penetrates all things.

Many nursing theorists—that is, former practicing nurses who now teach or administer academic departments—view mainstream ("patriarchal") medicine with a mixture of contempt and envy. In their attempts at "empowerment," they have developed their own "expertise" in alternative medicines, including TT. They are generating a distinct body of pseudo-scholarship which they view as a challenge to established medical literature.

TT isn't the only troubling practice among New Age nurses. Some now pursue a potentially dangerous form of patient "advocacy" in which the patient—not the medical staff—determines what kind of treatment is appropriate. This is seen as a bold rejection of the "paternalism" associated with the doctor-patient relationship, which has at times been excessive.

While rigorous scientific evidence does not support TT, there are an estimated 50,000 practitioners in the U.S. The technique is offered in at least two hundred hospitals, including Columbia Presbyterian Hospital in New York City and Georgetown Medical Center in Washington, D.C. The National League for Nursing, the accrediting body for the nations' nursing colleges, actively promotes TT through books and videotapes.

But all these good vibes were disturbed on April 1, 1998, when the *Journal of the American Medical Association* published a paper that demonstrated—quite literally—that TT is so silly that even a child can debunk it. For the study, titled "A Close Look at Therapeutic Touch," twenty-one practitioners were recruited. Nine-year-old Emily Rosa of Loveland, Colorado, who had devised the experiment for her fourth-grade science class, sat on one side of a parti-

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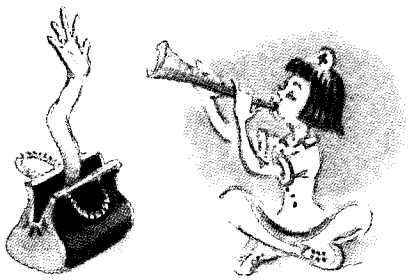
tion; the practitioners were on the other. The practitioners were asked to put their hands through a cut-out and determine whether Emily's hand was positioned above the practitioner's healing hands. Each was given ten tries. At the end, the practitioners had been right about the same percentage of times as if they had simply guessed —which, indeed, a skeptic might argue is what they were doing. Little Emily Rosa made the *New York Times.*

The alternative medicine community was not amused. Cynthia Hutchinson, a TT instructor in Boulder with a doctorate in nursing, told the *Los Angeles Times* that the *Journal of the American Medical Association* was itself suspect because "it is a political organization and many physicians ...feel threatened by human aura therapy because it means that their power and money are being taken away." Mary Ireland of the Rutgers College of Nursing has dismissed the experiment as unrealistic because, among other things, "it gloss[ed] over the fact that practitioners generally use both hands to assess the human energy field."

On Internet bulletin boards, nurses scoffed at Emily Rosa's experiment. Even Dr. Andrew Weil, the alternative-medicine guru, weighed in: "I don't buy [Emily Rosa's] findings," he wrote in "Ask Dr. Weil," his on-line column. "There is too much evidence that healing energy systems work in cultures throughout the world, in a variety of forms."

For patients, accepting their nurses' claims that TT is effective and scientifically proven may be just the beginning of a slide down the slippery slope into all-out faddism. As an oncology nurse, Elaine Bishop of Grand Rapids, Michigan, has seen a number of patients succumb to the empty promises of procedures like coffee enemas and shark cartilage. "They come back to our hospital in worse shape than when they left," she observes. Of course, some cancer patients—even those with chances for survival or with chances for a less agonizing death—will always turn in desperation to alternative medicine, but nurses should not encourage them. In 1994, after Bishop was pressured to participate in TT training by the nursing administration at a local hospital, she complained to an internal review committee of doctors and got TT banned from her hospital. "The doctors were easy to convince," Bishop recalls, "but the chief of nursing was another story. She wasn't pleased, to say the least."



Here are some true stories:

- A nurse asked a man in much pain if he would "like some help with relaxation techniques." Instead of reporting the unusual amount of pain to the physician, the nurse sent in an aide to do Healing Touch. When the patient saw her waving her hands over him, he thought he was getting his last rites and panicked, thus delaying his healing. Another man was so startled by the hand waving that he fell out of bed and broke his arm.
- A woman with abdominal pain went to a TT nurse who had a private practice. The nurse recommended TT treatments only, and the woman died of complications from a ruptured appendix a few days later.
- A woman who phoned her HMO nurse when she developed severe abdominal pain was told that she should use the pain to get in touch with her inner self. Nothing else. The woman went to an emergency room, where she was found to have a pelvic mass, later determined to be a large ovarian tumor.

Many modern nurses bristle at the Florence Nightingale image of the profession—that is, the nurse as a woman obedient to the doctor. The revolt of the nurses can be traced back to Barbara Ehrenreich and Dierdre English's 1970s pamphlet, "Witches, Midwives, and Nurses." They viewed nurses as victims:

"Our oppression as women health workers today is inextricably linked to our oppression as women. Nursing, our predominant role in the health system, is simply a workplace extension of our roles as wife and mother. The nurse is socialized to believe that rebellion violates not only her 'professionalism,' but her very femininity. This means the male medical elite has a very special stake in the maintenance of sexism in the society at large: Doctors are the bosses in an industry where the workers are primarily women.... Take away sexism and you take away one of the mainstays of the health hierarchy."

Kathryn A. Ballou, a clinical instructor in nursing at the University of Missouri, Kansas City, finds herself immersed in nursing's struggle for recognition and autonomy. If nurses truly wish to advance "our professional power base," she said, they will need to liberate themselves from the confines of the medical profession. "Imitation of an oppressor group such as medicine will only keep us oppressed," Ballou contends. "Otherwise we will most assuredly continue to feel unap-

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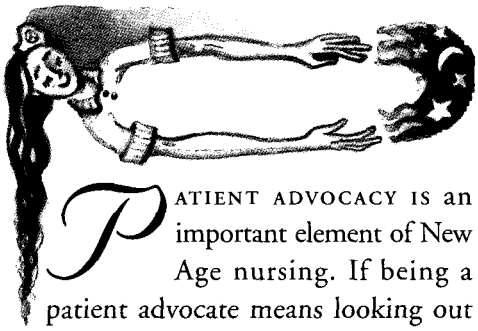
preciated and powerless." What any of this has to do with caring for patients remains unclear.



PATIENT ADVOCACY IS an important element of New Age nursing. If being a patient advocate means looking out for the interests of patients, then all health care professionals should be advocates. But a new variant, "existential advocacy," is becoming popular among nurse theorists. According to existential advocacy supporter Peter A. Ellis, senior staff nurse at England's Dulwich Hospital, "the nurse is obliged to act in the patient's best interest, on the basis that only the patient can define his or her best interests." He adds, "Overruling patient wishes...is blatantly paternalistic."

Oddly, in the postmodern view, the patient's right to choose does not appear to extend to informed consent—at least not when a TT enthusiast is tending the sick. According to TT proponents, the technique can actually be dangerous if not done properly. Wrote TT mother Dolores Krieger: "Human energies are not well understood at this time, but we do know that indiscriminate and persistent interaction can overload the human system; a healee can overdose on human energies." Others warn that if the healer is emotionally upset or physically ill, she can "transfer negative energy" to the patient, making him sicker.

Granted, all of this is no more plausible than TT itself, but if the practitioner believes it, isn't it her ethical duty to inform the patient of these potential side effects? But many do not; TT is often performed without consent on patients who are asleep or in a coma, or on infants whose parents are unaware of it.

A more frightening prospect is that "existential advocacy" sometimes leads nurses to encourage patients to make patently bad decisions—say, choosing a homeopathic remedy over radiation or chemotherapy for a treatable cancer. This is not the Enlightenment triumph of autonomous persons resolving problems using objective standards of evidence, reason, and logic. It is the postmodern triumph of individuals creating their own truths because no objective truth exists. This may be a harmless approach to literary criticism, but in medicine the stakes are much higher.

The existential nurse romanticizes the nurse-patient relationship. One nurse-midwife insists that caring requires that patients and nurses have "ample time to connect" if they are to achieve "reciprocity and mutuality."

This practitioner distills the gauzy New Age sensibility of the relationship in a poem that was cited, approvingly, in an article in *Nursing Science Quarterly:*

> *And when it comes I examine the placenta*
> *I'm sorting the particles and waves in the spectrum of light*
> *And when my work is finished I go from the place of birth*
> *I walk out across the fields of the planets into the spaces between the furthest stars.*

Jane Salvage, a British nurse, calls this "idea of a partnership between nurses and patients" the essence of "new nursing." Salvage, who is herself skeptical of the new nursing, explains: "General hospital patients are seeking help for physical disorders, albeit with an affective component. Their immediate concern is likely to be relief from pain and discomfort, rather than [the development of] a meaningful relationship." The evidence supports her. When patients were asked what was most important to them about their nurse, they focused on clinical competence. Nurses, however, when asked what they believe patients deem most important, cite the intangibles: psychological support, listening to patients, comforting them—the very qualities, ironically, that other postmodern nurses decry as the feminine stereotype of bedside nursing. According to Christine Webb, professor of nursing at the University of Plymouth in England, patients welcome these features but only after they are satisfied that the nuts and bolts of bedside nursing are tightly in place.

Salvage identifies an ethical problem that comes with glorifying the nurse-patient relationship: The major beneficiary of the process appears to be the nurse. Indeed, one feminist professor of nursing says that this "empowered" caring "reflects the notion of both the patient and the nurse being transformed during the caring relationship." Although it is nice, naturally, when people enjoy their work, it is a violation of patient trust for a nurse to put her own psychological needs over the patient's clinical and technical requirements. ◆

Science advisor to the Independent Women's Forum, Sally Satel, M.D., is a lecturer at Yale Medical School. Her new book PC M.D.: How Political Correctness Is Corrupting Medicine *will be released this fall.*
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KARLYN BOWMAN'S

Poll-Pourri

TWO CHEERS FOR THE MONARCHY

THIRTY YEARS AGO, when Market & Opinion Research International (MORI) first asked Britons if they favored Britain becoming a republic or remaining a monarchy, the vast majority of the British public said they preferred a monarchy. Only 18 percent thought the country should become a republic. When the organization repeated the question last year, support for the monarchy was still robust. Only 16 percent in 1999 wanted their country to become a republic.

But the British don't have a great deal of confidence about the monarchy's staying power. In 1990, about seven in ten said there would be a monarchy in 50 years. Today, only three in ten say that will be the case.

About a quarter in Britain believe that the monarchy's role should remain broadly unchanged, and 60 percent say that it should be modernized. More than seven in ten think Prince Charles should make his views known on the environment, the countryside, and the family, genetically modified foods, architecture, and fox hunting.

VIVAT REGINA!

STRONG MAJORITIES IN MORI's polls say Elizabeth should remain queen as long as possible but three in ten believe she should abdicate at some stage. In 1981, the British public was evenly divided. About 60 percent now say Prince Charles will make a good king when he comes to the throne in the future, down from about 80 percent who felt that way in 1991. Still, his image has improved considerably since the time of Princess Diana's death. Perhaps surprisingly, satisfaction with the job Prince Charles is doing as Prince of Wales (yes, they ask the job approval question about princes, too) is higher now than Tony Blair's rating.

MISTRESS CAMILLA

WHEN ASKED WHETHER Prince Charles and Camilla Parker-Bowles should continue their relationship privately, be completely public about it, or split up, a third of Britons say they should continue it privately, and a near majority (48 percent) say they should be open about it. Since the question was first asked in 1997, around 10 percent have consistently said they should split up.

"Assuming they stay together," 49 percent of Britons in MORI's poll said they should get married, but three in ten want them to continue their relationship outside of marriage. A strong majority (61 percent) say he should still be allowed to become king if they marry (34 percent dissent), but an even larger one, 78 percent, do not think she should become the queen of England.

Around six in ten in June said she should appear with the prince in public, but only about four in ten said she should appear in public with the princes. A majority believe she should spend time with them in private.

FADING ROSE?

IN A POLL taken by MORI in October 1998, a majority agreed that the death of Diana would have a long-term impact on British society, and four in ten in a separate question said she was still in their thoughts.

Nearly 80 percent agreed "that she was a special person who will be remembered for generations to come." At one and the same time, however, a virtually identical 79 percent said that "it is time [that the nation] move on from Diana." Sixteen percent said it was too soon to abandon her memory.

THE BLAIR BABE

THE LAW HAS been changed in Britain so that parents now have a legal right to take up to three months' unpaid parental leave from their jobs during the first five years after their baby is born. Ten percent of Brits want Tony Blair to take parental leave when his new baby arrives, 5 percent want him to give up his job.

A majority, 54 percent, said the Blairs should claim the child benefit available to all parents in Britain. Seven in ten want her to have the baby in a National Health Service hospital. Two-thirds say they should send the child to a state school. ◆

Karlyn Bowman is a resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute in Washington, D.C.

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Why Paul McCartney is the Sexiest Man Alive

What makes a man sexy? *Melinda Ledden Sidak* shows that it's not just being a hunk

A FEW MONTHS AGO *People* magazine published its annual "Sexiest Man Alive" issue—a rather amusing counterpoint to its sister publication *Time*'s annual "Man (or in these gender-neutral times, 'Person') of the Year." Actor Richard Gere was the sexiest man alive in 1999. As in previous years, the main criterion for the title was physical appearance—"Hot" or "Not" as voted by *People*'s readership. While no one can deny that a pleasing appearance is very important to a man's attractiveness, I couldn't help but think, as I perused the issue in my doctor's waiting room, that *People* had overlooked several far more powerful candidates.

Their sexiness, however, stems not simply from their physical appeal—which all possess—but from a more subtle yet powerful attractiveness. I speak here of celebrity hunks who are obviously in love with their wives of many years—a small but hardy breed. To name a few of the more famous examples, these include Paul McCartney, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Paul Newman, and Ronald Reagan.

As the foregoing list indicates, the category of sexy men in love with their wives is not associated with any particular philosophy or political ideology. Indeed, the very mystery and randomness of such a blessing is part of the appeal. But when you examine the deepest yearning and fantasies of any woman and the mythical archetypes of virtually every civilization, a woman craves not only the appearance of a handsome and charming prince who falls madly in love with her, but, most important, that they live happily ever after.

While most fairy tales go into considerable detail about the part leading up to the marriage vows, the happy ever after part usually is left vague and unexplored. We know what Cinderella had to go through to land Prince Charming, and the many mishaps and misunderstandings Elizabeth Bennet experienced before she closed the deal with Mr. Darcy, but the next bit is simply assumed. Other great love stories simply kill off one or both of the lovers. Only Tolstoy really does a good job on happy marriages, and for that, one has to read over 1,000 pages and endure a lot of existential despair.

What "happily ever after" must mean, however, is that the husband's love for his wife remain romantic, passionate, and exclusive even after many years of familiarity, the birth of several children, and the sagging of various body parts. For this reason, good-looking celebrities who seem passionately in love with their wives but who have been married only a few years do not qualify.

Although such men are commendable and appealing compared with the general sea of iniquity and "live-in loves," as *People* calls them, of most male celebrities, they do not yet rate Sexiest Man Alive ranking until their passion has stood the test of time. How

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very much sexier and more appealing these men and their lives seem compared to the sordid life of a garden-variety celebrity like Gere, a divorced man with a brand new baby by a woman not his wife.

My top pick for Sexiest Man Alive in Love with His Wife has got to be Paul McCartney, a man whose deep grief over the death of his wife Linda from breast cancer in 1998 and obvious devotion to her during their life together is truly unusual. According to a *People* story about her death, "[a]s celebrities' marriages went, theirs was an anomaly—this couple in the limelight who couldn't bear to be apart even after three decades." By their own account, the couple only spent a few nights apart during their entire marriage, and he wrote numerous love songs to and about her. When interviewed by the BBC after her death, McCartney was near tears in describing the impact of her death: "We fancied each other something rotten," he said. "To me, she was always still my girlfriend."

His devotion to Linda seems even more singular and mysterious when one considers that Linda was no supermodel. As one equally fascinated observer of this couple's lasting love wrote a couple of years ago, Linda "was never a great beauty. She wasn't glamorous. She wore baggy clothes and little makeup. But when her husband sang, 'La la la, la, la, la lovely Linda, with the lovely flowers in her hair,' she could have been Helen of Troy."

While perhaps less lyrical in his expressions of love for wife Maria Shriver, tough guy Arnold Schwarzenegger visibly melts when talking about her. I once saw him wink at the camera and tell one interviewer that she was a "sexy devil." More impressive is how warmly he speaks about his admiration for her as the mother of his children. Describing her as an "incredible", "unbelievable" mother devoted to their four children, he explains that "you don't know when you marry someone what kind of a mother would they be. And it is a shot in the dark really. And then to see your first child be born and to see how dedicated of a mother your wife is and then you see all four children now and you see Maria like that. It's just amazing." As expressions of love in the English language go, it's not Shakespeare, but it is touching and sincere nonetheless.

Like Arnold, Paul McCartney often has expressed his appreciation for his wife's performance of traditional feminine roles, as great cook and loving, supportive mother. Such politically incorrect appreciation of their wives as nurturers of home and family seems counter to the postmodern sensibility that gender roles are meaningless social constructs and that "marriage" consists of two interchangeable partners, not necessarily of the opposite sex. Rather, it suggests the continued strength and romantic potential of the husband and wife in complementary but different roles in the relationship. If the choice is between the enduring "partnership" of Bill and Hillary and the enduring love affair between Paul and Linda or Arnold and Maria, which would you choose?

The wife's role as a source of emotional support for her husband seems equally important in the legendarily devoted—and completely different—marriages of Ronald and Nancy Reagan and Paul Newman and Joanne Woodward. Newman frequently cites his wife's "unconditional support in all my choices and endeavors and that includes my race car driving which she deplores." Nancy Reagan was often praised or vilified for "the gaze," her absorbed and apparently transfixed facial expression as she watched her husband make a speech she had probably heard a hundred times before. The mutual devotion of Ron and Nancy was so steadfast and all-encompassing it appears even to have made their children feel excluded. Today, as he fades into the sunset of Alzheimer's disease, she continues to nurse him tenderly. Obviously, Nancy and Joanne are two very different women, yet both women managed to be supportive of and continually fascinating to their husbands over four decades of marriage.

There is, of course, a dark side to the special attraction many women have for very happily married men. For them, it is not the elation that comes with realizing that happy ever after can happen. Rather, these vixens are attracted to the ultimate challenge of pulling a man away from his wife. Sometimes, too, in a moment of weakness, the man may succumb to temptation thinking it is "just sex." But the moment he does, he, like Samson, loses all his strength and the temple comes tumbling down. He is no longer a prince, he's just another guy, and he and his wife, even if the marriage survives, are just another married couple. More likely, his marriage, life, and family will be destroyed—think of the Michael Douglas character in the movie *Fatal Attraction.* How much better to have followed the advice of Paul Newman in matters both culinary and matrimonial: "I have steak at home, why go out for hamburger?" ◆

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Teach 'Em or Book 'Em

Why are so many kids being tried as adults? *Kay Hymowitz* tells the story behind the headlines

Several years ago, Nathaniel Abraham, an eleven-year-old boy in Pontiac, Michigan, was playing with a rifle near his home. Some said he was merely attempting target practice against the trees, while others insisted that the boy took deliberate aim. What was unmistakable was that Nathaniel shot and killed an older boy as he was walking out of a convenience store. A few days later, the police arrested Nathaniel. It was Halloween and the child, preparing to go out trick or treating, was wearing his costume.

Nathaniel became the youngest child ever to be tried for murder as an adult in the United States. He had committed the kind of crime that, until recently, society deemed to be largely beyond the capacity of children. Nathaniel's case made headlines because a change in Michigan law had made it easier to transfer children from juvenile to criminal court.

What did not rate headlines was that Nathaniel had had twenty-two contacts with the police before the murder, but he had never once been arrested. Indeed, Nathaniel's mother had pleaded with the court to do something to help her with her boy, whom she found to be out of her control. She was refused. Without an arrest, it seems, the court could not step in—to do so would have violated Nathaniel's civil rights.

Nathaniel's case illustrates the predicament we find ourselves in today. Two important institutions, the juvenile court system and the public schools, which once were central to socializing children and teaching them civic virtues, have been rendered impotent. As adults remove themselves from the project of instilling values, other, more coercive institutions will have to move in. As Christopher Lasch has written, "The only alternative to the superego is the super state." In other words, if we aren't going to teach them, we'll probably have to book them.

Had Nathaniel been tried as a child, he would have come before the juvenile court, which was founded at the beginning of the twentieth century. Until then, children were sentenced and imprisoned no differently from adults. Kids who pilfered coal from the train tracks might find themselves sharing quarters with horse thieves and murderers, or even worse, rapists. But in 1899, Progressive reformers inaugurated the first juvenile court for troubled youth. The judge

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in the new court was to be recast from an impersonal agent of the law meting out retributive justice, to something closer to what one reformer called "a wise parent."

There were substantial dangers built into the design of the juvenile court, but it was founded on a humane and important truth in American life: The adolescent is not an adult. The founders of the court believed that the adolescent does not yet have full grasp of the virtues required for citizenship. The juvenile court was set up to help the unruly adolescent learn these virtues.

The judge, who was given sole discretion, looked at the child and asked if the youth had been in trouble before and why. What were things like at home? Did he need to be removed from a brutal home? Or did he just need supervision from a parole officer? The judge arranged for punishment in accordance with what he deemed the child's best interest. In short, the juvenile court was designed to be a socializing institution. In some respects, it was more like a school than a court.

But, that changed in 1967 with a landmark case that led to the wholesale reformation of the juvenile court. The Supreme Court justices in a case known as *In re Gault*, announced in the most dramatic terms that "neither the Fourteenth Amendment nor the Bill of Rights is for adults alone."

Minors such as Nathaniel Abraham should have the same due process rights, including the right to a lawyer, as adults. Like adults, minors should also have the right to confront witnesses. *Gault* began to erase some of the legal distinctions between children and adults.

Although the *Gault* decision may have ensured that a judge could not be arbitrary or dictatorial, the problem was that it also made it harder for the juvenile court to behave as a socializing institution. Consider the mere fact that kids have the right to remain silent. When a child is in trouble with the law, most parents want him to take responsibility. "You should tell the truth," they say. Society needs its parents to think this way. Guilty kids, as we know, are prone to blame their victims or their peers. The resistance to admitting guilt for a misdeed runs deep in human nature, and owning up only comes with careful teaching, and even then it's precarious.

Yet, the right to be treated as an adult subverts the moral lesson that one should take responsibility for one's actions. It gives the sullen adolescent the opportunity—no, the right—to act on his worst instincts. And, it forces them into an adversarial stance with those who should be teaching them.

Criminologists and law enforcement officers know that kids generally start as what they call "minnows," engaging in minor crimes such as stealing bikes. After *Gault*, it became expensive and impractical for prosecutors to conduct full-scale investigations and prosecutions of each bicycle thief and schoolyard bully. And even when such a case is successfully brought to trial, kids often figure out that by failing to show up, they can add to the likelihood that exasperated witnesses won't return and then their case will be dropped. Author Edward Humes' account of the Los Angeles juvenile court, *No Matter How Loud I Shout*, noted that lawyers sometimes help their adolescent clients find ways to delay, an especially disturbing development given the need for swift and clear responses from adults in their lives.

In one very interesting segment of Humes' book, one judge, attempting to recapture the original spirit of the juvenile court, allowed parents at the end of their rope to bring in their troubled kids for an old-fashioned talking to from the man or woman in the black robe. But, soon, the judge was forced to suspend his efforts: He was violating these children's rights.

Now, anyone who has spent any time around children knows rule one: Kids need to know there are clear and speedy consequences to their misbehavior. But, for all its good intentions, *Gault* made this almost impossible. Adults may understand the slow and cautious workings of the law, the need for witnesses, the reasons for delay, but children don't. *Gault* made it harder to punish the sorts of mischief that children like Nathaniel Abraham almost always engage in on their way to more serious crimes.

Nathaniel Abraham knew that adults stood around and did nothing when he burglarized someone's house. Why shouldn't he believe that they would do the same thing when he shot and killed someone?

The Supreme Court justices and children rights advocates assumed that children would be liberated by *Gault*. In fact, the opposite has happened. Between the mid-1980s and 1995, there was a fifty percent increase in the number of juveniles held in state facilities. (This figure may be the dark secret behind the recent decline in juvenile crime: Many of the juveniles who might be committing crimes are locked up.) We've also seen an increasing number of children like Abraham, who graduate from minor mischief to serious crime. In other words, as the juvenile court system has lost the mission of helping shape consciences—the superego—children have become prisoners of their own worst impulses

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and also prisoners of the super state.

The collapse of adult authority in the schools can't, of course, be pinned to just one cause. But, a pivotal moment came two years after *Gault*, and it was also related to another Supreme Court decision. This was *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District. Tinker* came about after several students from Des Moines donned black armbands and protested against the Vietnam War. The principal demanded that the students remove their armbands or else face suspension. One of them, a fifteen-year-old named John F. Tinker, sued and eventually the Supreme Court took his side.

"It can hardly be argued," wrote Justice Abe Fortas for the majority, "that either students or teachers shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate. Students in school, as well as out of school, are persons under the Constitution."

What the Supreme Court was saying then was that students have a constitutional right to free speech. Whenever I try to think about what that means, I imagine my twelve-year-old daughter's having the constitutional right to free speech in our house. Of course, there was a certain justice to the *Tinker* case, but the decision has had the effect of unleashing a host of unintended consequences.

As educators came to fear million dollar lawsuits, they retreated from one of their major tasks: preparing kids for citizenship in a democratic society. With the paramount good being free expression, educators began to neglect the important task of instructing students in the norms of responsibility and civility required for a democratic society to maintain itself. The consequences are not merely unpleasant and uncivil. They can actually be dangerous.

In Springfield, Oregon, a fifteen-year-old, Kip Kinkel, reported on how to build a bomb in science class; in another class he read from his diary about how he dreamed of killing other students. Why didn't somebody intervene? Because, as far as the school was concerned, this was the typical behavior of a fifteen-year-old boy until Kinkel went on a rampage and killed his parents and two classmates. The principal noted that if he pulled in every kid who talked about murder, he would have an assemblyful.

At Columbine High School, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold wrote violent poems. In a school video project, they showed themselves pretending to shoot up their school. Here again adults did nothing. And these are only the well-known cases. There are many others, including that of a high school student from Half Moon Bay, California, who wrote compositions in the Klebold and Harris mode. In one, he wrote about torching the school library and beating up the school principal. And, in another, which he called "Going Postal," he spoke of taking a gun to school and putting seven bullets into the principal's body. The good news in this case is that the boy was suspended. The bad news is his parents sued the school district on the grounds that the suspension violated the spirit of *Tinker*. His suspension was reduced to one day.

Most students are not going to threaten to kill their classmates or blow up their school, with or without *Tinker*. And most are not going to carry through on these threats even when they do make them. But as the students' right to free expression erodes the school's ability to stop inappropriate speech, adults will remain indifferent to more ordinary juvenile nastiness such as cursing, name calling, and bullying.

As adults pull back from the informal work of socializing children, they will inevitably subject them to more coercive forms of power. Some child advocates of the sixties and seventies referred to schools as prisons. If only they could see them now. After several "liberating" Supreme Court decisions it has come to pass that today, resentful students must march through metal detectors, get sniffed for guns by trained dogs, and look out at the streets from barred windows while police and security guards patrol the hallways.

When things work as they should, adults endeavor to instill a sense of conscience and norms of decency in children by correcting their frequently boorish behavior and cruel speech. When adults fail to do this informally, eventually the state steps in. But authoritarian measures do not help to socialize children for a free society. They merely substitute the threat of statist force for moral suasion. It is only today that children find themselves the subject of laws originally designed for adults. These laws (such as those on sexual harassment) now politicize and control their young lives.

"From authority, there is no escape," the sociologist Phillip Reiff has written. This is a lesson that the boomer generation may not have understood, but which the next generation will be grasping all too well. ◆

Kay Hymowitz is a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute and author of Ready or Not: Why Treating Children as Small Adults Endangers Their Future—and Ours. *This article was adapted from a speech she delivered to the Independent Women's Forum.*

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One last observation . . .

Before Amy Vanderbilt, There Was George Washington

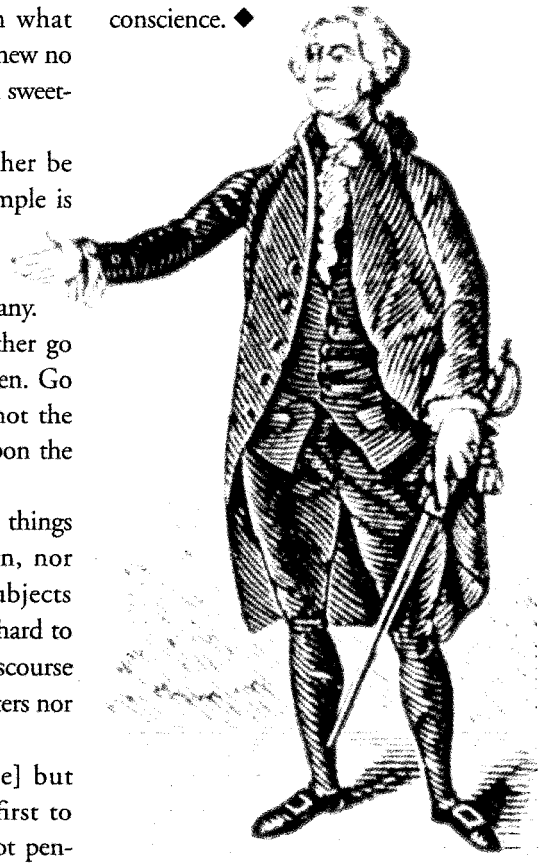
"Etiquette was an important matter in the eighteenth century," writes Richard Brookhiser in his insightful introduction to a slim volume on George Washington's *Rules of Civility* (The Free Press).

Washington copied these 110 precepts into a notebook at the age of fourteen. Washington's *Rules of Civility*, a list originally compiled by French Jesuits for the benefit of their students, governed the rest of his life.

"[T]o dismiss *The Rules of Civility* as 'mere' etiquette, and outdated etiquette at that," notes Brookhiser, "is to miss the point. The rules address moral issues, but they address them indirectly."

Forthwith a sampling:

- Every action done in company ought to be done with some sign of respect to those that are present.
- Sleep not when others speak, sit not when others stand, speak not when you should hold your peace, walk not on when others stop.
- When in company, put not your hands to any part of the body not usually discovered.
- When you sit down, keep your feet firm and even, without putting one on the other or crossing them.
- Read no letters, books, or papers in company, but when there is a necessity for the doing of it you must ask leave. Come not near the books or writings of another so as to read them unless desired, or give your opinion of them unasked. Also look not nigh when another is writing a letter.
- Shew not yourself glad at the misfortune of another though he were your enemy.
- When you see a crime punished, you may be inwardly pleased, but always shew pity to the suffering offender.
- Do not laugh too loud or too much at any publick spectacle.
- When a man does all he can though it succeeds not well blame not him that did it.
- Being to advise or reprehend any one, consider whether it ought to be done in publick or in private, presently, or at some other time, in what terms to do it; & in reproving shew no sign of choler, but do it with all sweetness and mildness.
- Wherein you reprove another be unblameable yourself, for example is more prevalent than precepts.
- Be not hasty to believe flying reports to the disparagement of any.
- Run not in the streets, neither go too slowly nor with mouth open. Go not shaking your arms, kick not the earth with your feet, go not upon the toes, nor in a dancing fashion.
- Utter not base and frivolous things among grave and learn'd men, nor very difficult questions or subjects among the ignorant, or things hard to be believed. Stuff not your discourse with sentences among your betters nor equals.
- Be not froward [obstinate] but friendly and courteous, the first to salute, hear, and answer. Be not pensive when it's time to converse.
- If two contend together take not the part of either unconstrained, and be not obstinate in your own opinion. In things indifferent be of the major side.
- Make no show of taking great delight in your victuals. Feed not with greediness. Eat your bread with a knife, lean not on the table, neither find fault with what you eat.
- When you speak of God or His attributes, let it be seriously & with reverence. Honor & obey your natural parents though they be poor.
- Labour to keep alive in your breast that little spark of celestial fire called conscience. ◆



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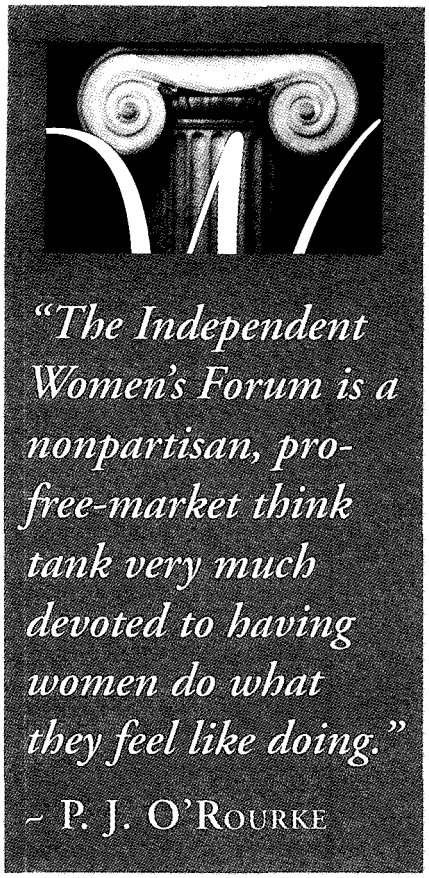
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